



XBOX 360 REVIEWS

The ultimate buyers' guide – every new Xbox 360 game

Contents

90 Aliens vs. Predator
It's dark, it's scary and we've got the first review. Game over, man!

94 Dante's Inferno
Take a journey through Hell without having to go to Croydon.

96 Guitar Hero: Van Halen
Legendary guitar genius Van Halen gets his own insane music game.



98 BioShock 2
Can this sequel match the game that bowled us over in 2007?



104 Mass Effect 2
Rejoin Shepard and chums in another romp across the galaxy.

109 Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce
Another *Dynasty Warriors* game so soon? Time really does fly.

110 Darwinia+
Charming puzzler from indie heroes Introversion finally arrives.

112 Serious Sam HD
This stripped down and silly shooter is old-school in the extreme.

114 Arcade Reviews
What we think of *Matt Hazard: Blood Bath and Beyond*, *O Day Attack* and *Polar Panic*.

Details



Aliens vs



"Will you be a pious hero or
the ultimate badass?"

Make your choice in *ME2* p104



XBOX 360
THE OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE

MUST BUY!

SPredator

Sci-fi's biggest scrap is about to
chestburst onto your Xbox 360

Reviewer



Mike Channell
MightySeven

From now on, every time some casual gaming type tells us that graphics aren't important and they can get by with blurry, indistinct visuals, we're going to point them in the direction of *Aliens vs. Predator*. There have been *Aliens* games on past generations of consoles, but it's only in this first arrival on Xbox 360 that the lithe, glistening horror of Giger's creations can be adequately represented.

As a Marine stepping into the hive, with increasingly high-pitched pings coming from the motion tracker as

nightmarish creatures unfurl from the organic-looking walls, we were gripping the controller so tightly we thought we'd crack the plastic. In many locations all you have to rely on is the motion tracker and either the small pool of light thrown out by your flashlight or a single flickering flare. This means you're deprived of the bravado you usually enjoy in a first-person shooter. There are few more unsettling moments in gaming than casting your torch around a room and catching a brief glimpse of something skulking in the shadows.

Out of thin air

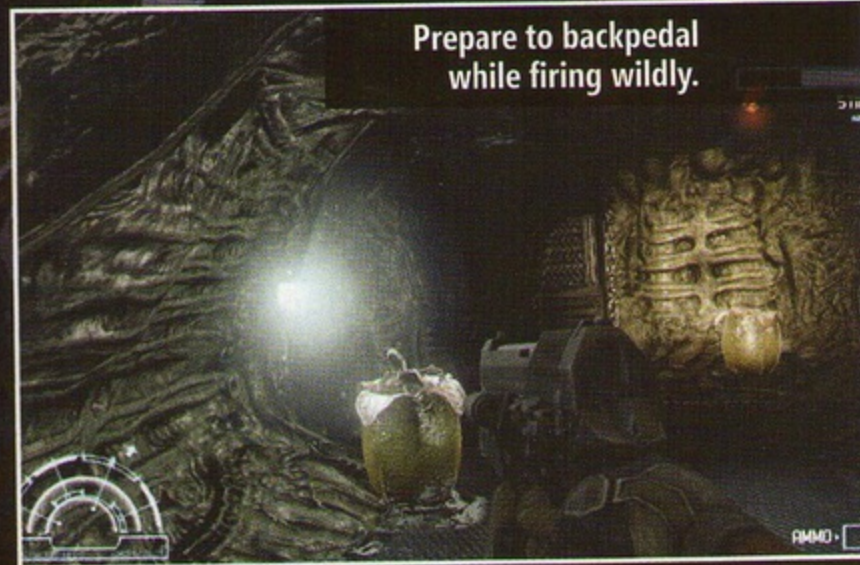
It turns out that when executed properly, the Alien is one of the most satisfying enemies we've ever gone toe-to-toe with. They're capable of using every surface available, appear as if from nowhere and, as a result, are far more unpredictable than your average

Did you know?

BAD COMPANY

The name Weyland-Yutani was created as a reference to two motor companies by Ron Cobb, a designer on *Alien*. Weyland is 'Leyland' and Yutani was designed to be a Japanese spaceship builder, similar to Toyota.

Prepare to backpedal
while firing wildly.



man-with-gun. They're used beautifully in the Marine campaign as well, with the pacing constantly shifting between tense creeping and shadow watching, nerve-jangling ghost-train scares and pure, unbridled bullet-spraying panic. Randy Pitchford and his Gearbox cohorts must be kicking themselves, because Rebellion has beaten them to the punch in creating an authentic and utterly terrifying *Aliens* experience.

The developer clearly knows the universe inside out, and has nailed the tone and style of the films - gritty, dirty sci-fi at its very best. The

THE KNOWLEDGE

What is it?

A monster collision
with humans in
the middle.

What's it like?

Being locked in a
dark room with
something nasty.

Who's it for?

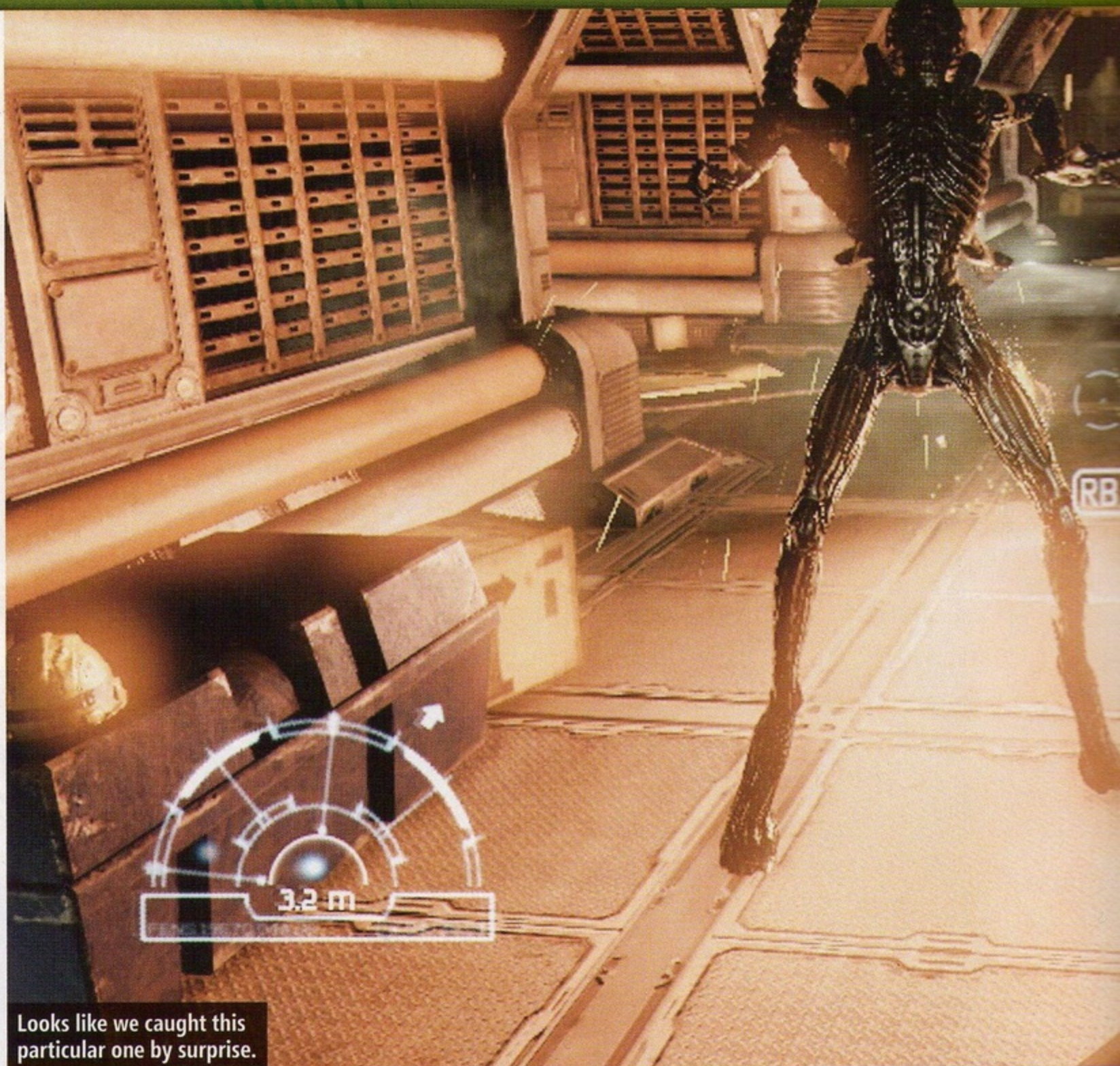
Sci-fi and horror
first-person
shooter fans.

BATTLING BISHOP

Lance Henriksen, famous for playing Bishop in *Aliens*, plays Karl Bishop Weyland of the Weyland Yutani Corporation – your chief antagonist throughout the game. He's clearly some relation to Charles Bishop Weyland, who was revealed to be the company's founder in the first *AvP* film, but you'll have to pile through the Marine campaign to find out exactly who he is.



Brown Aliens can spit acid from a distance.



Looks like we caught this particular one by surprise.

outpost you touch down at is a dusty, wind-blasted ghost town in the shadow of an enormous refinery – the game's architectural equivalent of the atmosphere processing plant from *Aliens*. *AvP* isn't the prettiest game, but it has moments of striking scale and subtle detail that make it one of the more atmospheric.

In addition to the more barren dustbowl areas, there's also a dense *Predator*-inspired jungle, no doubt a product of the terraforming efforts, which makes for extremely challenging terrain when you're a vulnerable Marine confined to the forest floor. While early in the campaign you'll be facing Aliens in industrial corridors, in the jungle you cross paths with the Predators who thrive in more open environments. Similarly, these technologically advanced killers are pitch-perfect, and squaring up to

"What begins as a tense stand-off quickly becomes a massacre"

one of them in a multi-levelled arena is as exhilarating as you'd expect.

While you spend the majority of your time as a Marine alone, you do have some allies that you'll meet with from time to time. In this hostile environment, you'll be thankful for moments where you're able to unwind for a moment or two. The storyline isn't rammed down your throat – that's left to the face-huggers – but it's engaging enough and encourages you to push through the next horribly infested area.

While the narrative scenes impress, *AvP* excels at set-pieces that occur during the

levels themselves – whether the straightforward scares or cinematic sequences, such as frantically huddled wave of Aliens until an elevator

Weakest link

There's a reason we haven't met an Alien or Predator campaign yet – it's just not as good. The Alien is by far the weakest of the three, simply because it's difficult to fashion a narrative around what is essentially an oversized, mindless insect.

MOVIE NERD SPOTTERS GUIDE

There are various nods to scenes from the films throughout the game, particularly from action classic *Aliens*. Here are a few of our favourites:

"I prefer the term 'Artificial Person'"
In *Aliens*, Bishop doesn't like being referred to as a 'synthetic'. In *AvP* you'll meet an android who prefers it the other way round.

"Kill me"
Anyone who's watched *Aliens* knows that once someone has been cocooned in the hive, they're in pretty serious trouble. Expect tough decisions ahead.

"They're coming out of the walls!"
In the game the Aliens are terrifyingly mobile, but once you get into the hive you realise they can spring from anywhere at any time.

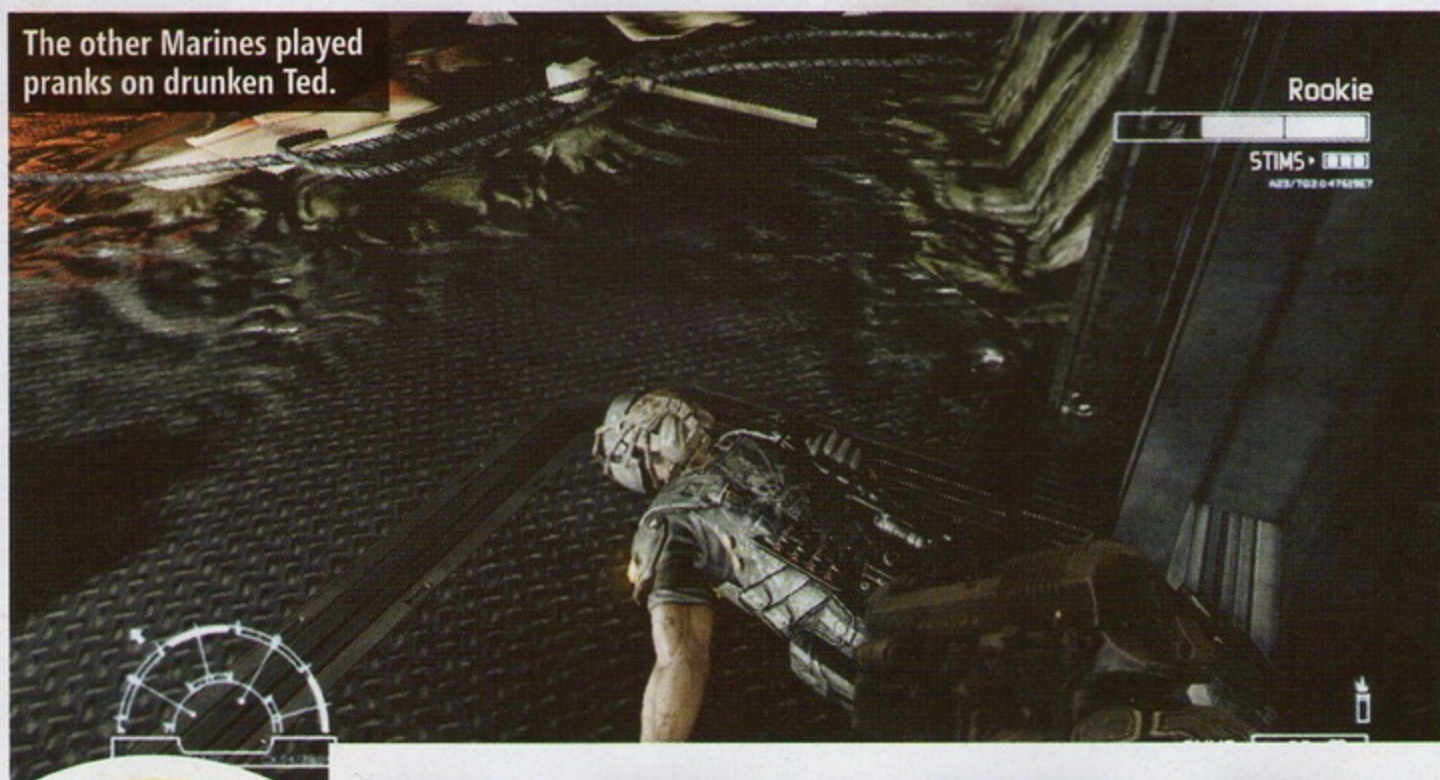
"How could they cut the power? They're animals!"
AvP's electrics are less than reliable. You'll be in the dark a lot, and there's every reason to be afraid.

"We're on an express elevator to hell, going down!"
The Marines' 'combat drop' has a reference that your character has only done a simulated one, similar to Lt. Gorman in *Aliens*.





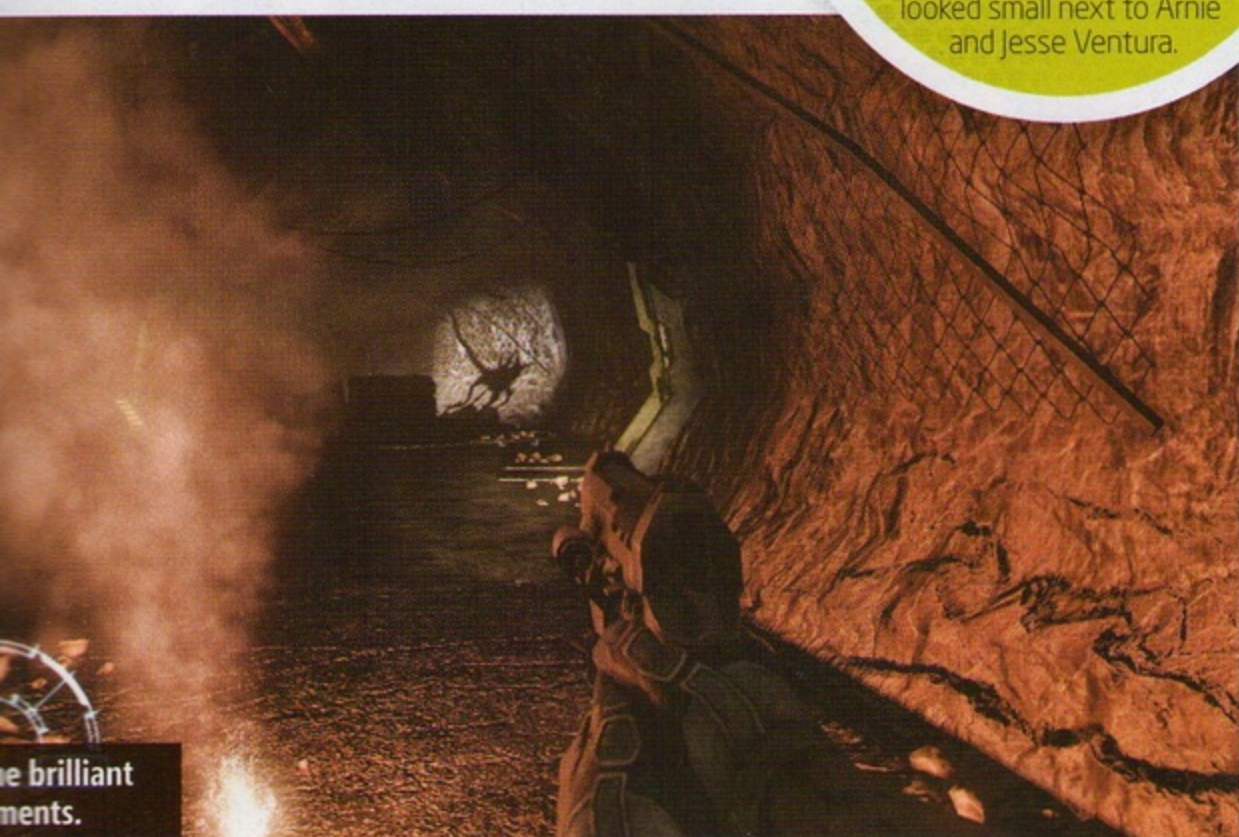
The other Marines played pranks on drunken Ted.



Did you know?

DAMME IT

In the original *Predator* film, the actor chosen to play the titular scaly beast was one Jean-Claude Van Damme. Apparently, he was replaced early in production because he looked small next to Arnie and Jesse Ventura.



the brilliant
ments.



You're only occasionally joined by comrades.



The very definition of a splitting headache.

tion that drives you through
ortion disappears, and it's just
ing Marines and Predators as
ou can muster. There's also a
usiness to it: you have to
row yourself at the enemy to
ich from a first-person
can be confusing, and often
sidestep your lunge.
ator campaign is somewhere
the two. There's a stronger
e, and the inclusion of ranged
ry gives you more in the way
ns when approaching a
on of heavily armed Marines.
se, if you're being mobbed by
who aren't fooled by your fancy
technology, you're still going to
et your wristblades dirty. If
s harder to stick the Aliens and



Time to give this chap a razor sharp cuddle.

come away unscathed than any of the other threats in the game.

The main problem with whichever two of the three campaigns you play last is that you end up revisiting the same areas from the other campaigns. To its credit, Rebellion has tried to ensure that in several areas you're taking a different route or seeing it from a different angle. This occasionally allows you to piece together another part of the wider plot, but there's still that lingering feeling of familiarity that lessens the impact of the experience.

Fortunately, playing as the monsters makes more sense in multiplayer, not least because Rebellion has built a couple of specific modes as homages to the *Alien* and *Predator* films. Infestation sees all but one of the players begin as Marines, with the remaining player as the first Alien. From then on, every Marine killed comes back as an Alien, so what begins as a tense stand-off quickly becomes a massacre. Then there's Predator Hunt, where the only way to score is to kill people as the Predator, and the only way to become the seven-foot tall scaly assassin is to kill the player who currently controls him.

AvP is a nerve-shredding rollercoaster of a game and fans of the films will be more

XBOX LIVE

AvP supports up to 18 players in modes such as Deathmatch and the brilliant Infestation and Predator Hunt. There's a four-player co-op survival mode too, which sees you play as Marines and face-off against endless waves of increasingly tough Aliens.

than satisfied with the reverence with which Rebellion has built the world, characters and weaponry. If you're looking for a tense horror experience, the Marine's adventure is up there with the best. It's just a shame the other campaigns don't quite match up. We can't help but wonder if the traditional structure should have been abandoned for a lengthier stint as the Marine. Nevertheless, AvP is well worth your time and, with the unique online offering as well, there's plenty to get your teeth, claws and wristblades into.

XBOX 360 VERDICT

- ✓ Superb atmosphere
- ✓ Faithful to the films
- ✓ The best bad guys around
- ✓ Unique multiplayer
- ✗ Two weaker campaigns

THE SCORE
A deeply creepy sci-fi shooter

8